

DMSO

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DMSO, or dimethyl sulfoxide, is a by-product of paper making. It comes from a substance found in wood.

DMSO has been used as an industrial solvent since the mid-1800s. From about the mid-20th century, researchers have explored its use as an anti-inflammatory agent.

The FDA has approved DMSO as a prescription medication for treating symptoms of painful [bladder](#) syndrome. It's also used under medical supervision to treat several other conditions, including shingles.

DMSO is easily absorbed by the [skin](#). It's sometimes used to increase the body's absorption of other [medications](#).

DMSO is available without a prescription most often in gel or cream form. It can be purchased in health food stores, by mail order, and on the Internet.

While it can sometimes be found as an oral supplement, its safety is unclear. DMSO is primarily used by applying it to the skin.

Why Do People Use DMSO?

DMSO has been used to try to relieve the pain of osteoarthritis. It has also been promoted as an "alternative" [cancer treatment](#).

People have used it to try to treat wounds, burns, and other injuries. People have also used it to try to treat such conditions as:

- Headache
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Eye problems
- Scars
- Scleroderma (disease that causes scar tissue to form in the skin)

Other than its use as a prescription medicine, there is little or no scientific evidence to support other claims made about DMSO's effectiveness.

The American Cancer Society says there is no evidence to support the use of DMSO to treat cancer . Using it that way could cause serious delays in getting proper and effective treatment.

A recent analysis of studies on the use of DMSO to relieve osteoarthritis pain found that it was not significantly more effective than placebo in relieving joint pain.

There are no studies that provide guidelines for determining the proper dose of DMSO. The gel used to treat osteoarthritis typically has a concentration of 25%. It is applied three or four times a day. But DMSO sold without a prescription can range from 10% concentration to 90%.

What Are the Risks of Using DMSO?

Some DMSO on the market may actually be industrial grade. Industrial grade DMSO may contain a number of impurities that can easily be absorbed into the skin with potentially serious health effects.

The most frequent side effects from using DMSO on the skin include:

- Stomach upset
- Skin irritation
- Strong odor of garlic

More serious side effects include:

- Severe allergic reactions
- Headaches
- Itching and burning when applied to the skin

DMSO can also cause a deadly reaction when used in high concentrations.

Using DMSO by mouth can cause:

- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Constipation

Increased appetite

DMSO can increase the effect of some medicines, which can lead to serious health issues. Examples of such medicines include:

- [Blood thinners](#)
- Steroids
- Sedatives

The biggest concern of DMSO as a solvent is that when it gets on the skin it will cause anything on the skin to be absorbed. So be sure to [wash your hands](#) and skin well before using.

Pregnant women and women who are [breastfeeding](#) should not use DMSO, since little is known about its possible effects on the [fetus](#) or infant.

You should also not use DMSO without talking to your doctor if you have:

- Diabetes
- [Asthma](#)
- [Liver](#) and [kidney](#) conditions

Always keep in mind that supplements are not regulated by the FDA the same way as drugs are. The manufacturer does not have to prove that a [supplement](#) is safe or effective before selling.

WebMD Medical Reference

[Sources](#) 

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